

Give It Time by Luddleston

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Summary:

It takes a while for Keith to come back to Earth after the war is over. When he does make it back, Lance is waiting for him.

Five times Keith sees Lance after the war, one time it's a date.

Give It Time

Author's Note:

This is totally what happens okay.

Considering a companion fic where Lance travels to the Patrulian zone and gets into Oriande because he's got the Altean marks now, finds out Allura's the new guardian, and asks her for advice on dating Keith <3

It took Keith a while to return to Earth for the first time. Running the Blade of Marmora while his mom and Kolivan attempted to turn the mess that was the Galra Empire back into something stable had been a challenge, especially when the Blades mostly consisted of green recruits who need a *lot* of guidance. Keith found himself thankful he'd had to spend so much time keeping Team Voltron under control, because he still didn't feel like leadership was his greatest strength. His mental process has been a constant repeat of "what would Shiro do?" and it got tiring, after a while.

But he made his way back to Earth, and for the first time, he felt like he was getting a *welcome home* instead of an *I guess you're back*. Hunk hugged him so hard his back cracked, and Pidge took him on a whirlwind tour of her lab that makes him wonder if this was what it was like when she showed her brother around the Castle of Lions for the first time. He met Shiro at the apartment he and his boyfriend lived in when they weren't aboard the Atlas, and they had coffee and Keith found himself thinking *oh, this must be what visiting family feels like*.

Lance bought a farm.

It was small, just a couple of buildings behind a big, old farmhouse with charmingly worn yellow paint on the shutters and window-boxes bursting with colorful flowers—Altean ones. Bright pink, and Keith remembered that it was the Altean color for mourning, and thought about the statue of Allura that had just been completed, a monument to the hero who saved existence itself.

There was also a cow in the pasture outside, and Keith recognized it by the pattern of spots as Kaltenecker. There was a smaller cow next to her, and Keith remembered Lance sending them all a picture of a calf with the caption "MEET KALTENECKER JR!!"

He couldn't keep the smile off his face as he knocked on the door.

Lance answered with a smile of his own, and Keith felt relief course through him, because last time he'd seen Lance, his smile never quite met his eyes. This was a good thing, Keith decided; Lance was healing. And Lance was hugging him. Not how Shiro hugged him, grabbing his hand and thumping him on the back briefly, no, Lance had his arms around Keith's rib cage and his head against Keith's and it was so comforting Keith felt like it would've been worth coming back from Earth just for this. And then he squished that thought down where all the other Lance-related thoughts that made Keith's heart flutter and his cheeks turn red went, following Lance into the charmingly cluttered kitchen so Lance could make them both a cup of tea.

The walls of Lance's house were plastered with pictures, his family, mostly, but Keith was surprised to see some of team Voltron's adventures, the selfies Lance was always taking, him and Hunk standing in front of a carving depicting Voltron on Puig, and then...

There was a little collage of pictures of the team, hung on a wooden frame that had chicken-wire stretched across it to keep the photos in place. Just pictures of them hanging out. Pidge and Hunk goofing off in the Castle. Keith with a rare smile as Hunk presented him with some kind of new weird alien food. More than half of them were of Allura; holding one of the mice in her hands as it snoozed adorably, posing in her Paladin armor just after the first time she put it on, smiling at Lance, smiling at nothing.

"It's weird not seeing you guys all the time," Lance said, after a while. "It's like, I'll be hanging out with my niece and nephew, and something funny happens, and I look around for Hunk to laugh with him about it... well, and then I just text him whatever it was, usually."

"Yeah, I feel the same," Keith said. "The Blades are cool, it's just..."

"They've never been mind-melded with you through the alien magic of a giant, five-part warship?"

"Yeah. That."

He was relieved that Lance understood, and he drank the rest of his tea slowly, looking out the window at the peaceful bucolic scenery, so very unlike what their past few years of constant firefights had been.

Lance hummed to himself as he rinsed out their mugs after they were finished, the light from the big bay windows growing orangey in the sunset. The blue markings on his cheeks stood out in contrast, and Keith thought about reaching out to brush his fingers along one. And then he stuffed that thought down into the recesses of his brain with the rest of them, again.

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Keith's next visit to Earth was forced on him by Krolia, who had somehow managed to notice the bags under his eyes on video chat and then overtook his latest mission with the Blades. She probably would've shoved him onto a ship with the coordinates for Earth plugged into the autopilot if he didn't agree to fly himself there.

He called Lance on the way, apologizing at least three times for not planning ahead, but could he stay at Lance's place? Lance didn't mind the spontaneity, of course, because he was Lance, and told Keith to stop apologizing and get his butt over here, pronto. Keith laid on the thrusters a little harder, taking some inadvisably sharp turns around a few asteroids.

Thankfully for him, Lance had kept up almost constant contact despite the distance. He called Keith when he could, and Keith could pretty much guarantee that if he turned on his datapad, he'd have at least one message from Lance. Even though Keith didn't see him often, Lance was still one of his best friends. If Keith went back in time and told sixteen-year-old Keith, he'd probably deck himself.

He reached Lance's house in the middle of the night but Lance was up and out the door as soon as Keith's ship touched down a safe distance from the

cow pasture, so as not to scare them. This time, he only hugged Keith for a second, too busy getting him through the door, because it was a chilly night and Lance was just in pajama pants and a tank top that showed off the uneven tan his usual T-shirt was giving him.

They didn't have much time to talk before Lance was yawning and nodding off, and even though Keith was on a different sleep schedule, he decided it was bedtime. He knew Lance got up early every morning. That was another thing Keith wouldn't have believed if you told him a few years ago.

Lance's house was a two-bedroom, but the second bedroom was occupied by still-unpacked moving boxes, even after all this time, and all the random detritus Lance had collected over the years, half of it from off-planet. Lance offered Keith the other side of his bed. It was big enough for the two of them to share it without even touching, he said. Keith slept on the couch. He didn't want to impose, and he really didn't want to drag up any emotions from wherever he'd determinedly put them.

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It used to be easier to ignore his feelings, Keith realized. Maybe he just hadn't been as emotionally aware, maybe the pressing threat of existential destruction was enough to push them to the back of his mind. Maybe it was the fact that then, Lance was just a boy he had a crush on who didn't like him back, and now, Lance was a man that Keith had more and more intense feelings for every time he saw him.

Lance was the first to arrive to their annual celebration on Altea. Keith was the second, and he found Lance staring up at the statue of Allura, a wistful half-smile on his face, a bouquet of pink Altean flowers sat at the base of the statue. Lance had whole meadows of them, now, Keith knew.

"I don't know if I'm ever going to not love her," Lance said. Keith wasn't sure if Lance was talking to him, or just making an observation to himself. "It's been a long time, but I..." His voice was getting that scratch in it that appeared whenever he talked about Allura.

"Three years," Keith said. "I'm not sure everybody would consider that a long time."

Lance thought for a moment. He was still looking at Allura, not at Keith, but Keith was used to that; it didn't bother him anymore. "I think, though... I think I've stopped feeling like I'm missing part of myself." Lance pressed a hand over his mouth for a second, but he kept going. "Is that a bad thing? Should I... I feel like I should miss her more, sometimes. And I do! I miss her. But sometimes, I think about moving on, you know?"

Keith didn't say that's what Allura would want, because that sounded like the cheesiest possible answer, and also, he wasn't sure if that was true, because he couldn't say what Allura would want, really.

Instead, he said, "you do?"

Lance turned and looked at him, uncharacteristically serious, but he was standing at the feet of the only person who could make him uncharacteristically serious. "Yeah," he said, unwavering, "I do."

Keith thought about what that meant all the way through dinner, until he boarded his ship and left Altea, and long after.

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"I can't believe this is only the fourth time I've been back home," Keith said. He was sitting with Lance on the back porch of his house, facing the newly constructed greenhouse and barn, watching Kaltenecker Jr. and the other cows roam around the pasture. He'd come there for Shiro's wedding, but he'd stayed a few days more, even though Shiro was long gone on his honeymoon, and it was just Keith and Lance now.

"Aww, hey," Lance said, elbowing Keith in the ribs, "I've never heard you refer to Earth as 'home' before."

"I meant 'back to Earth!'" Keith protested, elbowing him back, almost knocking over the pitcher of lemonade Lance had made. It was a blistering summer day, and Keith had to admit, the man knew how to make some

damn good lemonade. It was also a little bit spiked. Most Galra were completely tolerant to alcohol, and didn't see the purpose of it, but Keith wasn't most Galra, and living around them meant he also hadn't had a drink for maybe fourteen months. He was getting tipsy. It made his tongue slippery enough to refer to Earth—to refer to Lance's farm as 'home,' and it was enough to make him forget that he wasn't supposed to be staring at Lance so often.

"You should come home more often," Lance said. He laid a hand on the center of Keith's back, even though Keith's shirt was black and the sun was beating down and Keith had already complained about sweating through it. "I miss you."

"Sure you do," Keith scoffed. He would've elbowed Lance again, but that would've dislodged Lance's hand from its place between Keith's shoulder blades, and it was comfortable there. Keith almost leaned into him, almost put an arm around Lance's shoulders in turn, but then he noticed the soft blue of the crescents on Lance's cheekbones, and he thought, *he's never going to love you like he loves her*. It felt nasty curling up inside him, so he reached for his drink instead.

"I mean it," Lance said, after a while. "You know I love it here, and I wouldn't trade it for anything, but sometimes I think, what if I was still having wild space adventures or whatever it is you do."

"It's mostly wrangling a bunch of teenage Blades and thinking about how this must be how Shiro felt when he was dealing with the four of us as Paladins," Keith said honestly.

"Right, well. Sometimes, I think, what if I was doing that, but then I think what I actually want, is to have you... you guys, here." Lance put his arm around Keith's shoulders again, undeterred by the way Keith froze up under his touch. "I really do miss you, Keith."

Keith put both arms around Lance, burying his face in Lance's neck and not caring when the heat stuck his hair to Lance's skin and Lance's hair to his. "I miss you, too," he said, directly into Lance's skin, where nobody else could hear it.

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Keith should've expected this. He should've known. Lance, looking dreamily at the fall leaves as they turned orange, shouldn't have surprised him with, "I think I want to try dating again."

"Yeah?" he said, his throat feeling like it was constricting. He swallowed. It didn't help.

"Yeah." Lance looked at the grass under their feet. They were on a hike, well, more of a walk, around Lance's farm, the beautiful landscape like something out of a painting. "There's somebody I was thinking about asking. Just... trying, you know? I gotta try."

Keith's eyes stung. Oh god, was he going to cry or something? Appalled by his own reaction, he rubbed at his nose, sniffing and blaming his watering eyes on allergies. He wasn't used to nature. Right. "Who... who is she?"

Lance gave him an odd look. "You mean, who is he?"

Keith rolled his eyes. "Okay, how I was I supposed to know it was a guy? Anyway. Who is he?" He supposed he shouldn't have automatically assumed it was a girl. Lance had been telling him at Shiro's bachelor party that he was pretty sure he was bi, even though he'd only ever dated Allura. It had been a longer conversation than Keith had wanted it to be.

"Keith." Lance stopped walking, and Keith almost ran into him. "You really don't...?"

"No?" Was he supposed to know who it was? Had Lance mentioned somebody during the wedding? Had he texted Keith about somebody and Keith missed it?

Lance put both hands on Keith's shoulders. "It's you, dummy."

Looking back, the right thing to say had probably not been, "*what?*"

"I said, it's *you*, Keith. I want to go on a date." Lance looked uncharacteristically serious again. Keith had never noticed that the shades

of blue in his eyes and on his cheeks didn't quite match.

"With... with me?"

"Yes, you!" Lance shook his head. "Am I not reading this right?" He groaned. "I'm so bad at this. I'm sorry. I don't actually know how dating works."

"Well, you've dated a hundred percent more people than me, so."

"Will you just give me a yes or no?"

"Yes!" Keith used the lapels of Lance's thick denim jacket to pull him closer. "Yes, I want that. I've wanted that for years, so. Catch up, I guess."

"Years?" Lance looked almost furious. "Why didn't you tell me sooner!?"

Keith's grip on Lance's jacket was becoming dangerously close to the kind that he'd used to use to haul Lance in for a fight. "Because! If I told you when I started having feelings for you, you would've said no, because you were still chasing after Allura! And if I told you when I realized they weren't going away, it would've been a horrible time, because it was right after Allura... and she was your girlfriend, and she was my best friend, and she—and you—and I couldn't. I couldn't."

His hands were shaking. Lance's came to rest over them, holding him gently. "That long ago?" His voice was so quiet, it almost could've been the autumn breeze.

"So long ago." Keith's grip loosened, but he didn't let go, because it meant Lance wouldn't be holding his hands anymore. "You're... you're magnetic, Lance. The closer we got, it was like eventually... eventually, I couldn't help but be attracted."

"Jesus," Lance said, no louder.

"Also, you're gorgeous."

"Hey, that's my line," Lance teased, letting go of Keith's hands to put his arms around Keith's waist instead.

That night, Lance asked Keith once more if he'd like to just sleep in his bed, and this time, Keith agreed. Predictably, he woke with Lance's arms around him, because if Lance was asleep, he'd cuddle anything within range, but instead of freezing up and trying to extricate himself without waking Lance, he leaned into the touch, letting Lance hold onto him until he woke up complaining that the arm he'd wedged under Keith was full of pins and needles.

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Lance had three horses on his farm, and one of them was the kind of animal who was irritated with and wary of any humans she didn't trust, which made Keith proud that she had taken to him almost immediately. Lance had called her something weird and Altean that Keith couldn't pronounce, so he usually addressed her with, "hey, girl," instead, keeping his voice softer around her so she wouldn't spook.

"Okay, so, I know you have like, a *connection* with her, but if you don't wanna have to wrangle her under control at least four times, we're better off taking Gadget and Gizmo out instead."

Lance's other two horses had been named by his niece and nephew after watching the Little Mermaid too many times.

Oh, and Lance had announced the morning after asking Keith out that they were going horseback riding for their date, which made Keith admittedly nervous, because he'd seen how fast Lance tore across the fields on Gadget, just like his piloting, and Keith was more comfortable on the ground, petting the horses, than on top of them.

Lance had promised to go slow, with the kind of wink that made Keith certain it was an innuendo.

He swung himself into the saddle with enough grace that he didn't think he looked stupid. He was unpracticed, but he was also extensively trained in

climbing things, so climbing onto large animals wasn't much of a stretch. Lance was already sitting on top of Gadget, who was an enormous whitish male dappled with grey, and his stature made Lance significantly taller than Keith, because Gizmo was short. She was also an unobtrusive shade of brown, pretty, but not striking, like the black horse that Keith liked.

Lance did keep his gait slower than usual, but he still pulled in front of Keith, leading the way, which was nice, because Gizmo was content to follow him, and it didn't require much steering from Keith. Although Keith was used to steering a sentient creature, a horse wasn't quite a spaceship. Keith had to admit, he'd been more comfortable taking the Red Lion out for the first time.

"I feel like I'm in one of those cheesy movies my mom likes," Lance said, "the really romantic ones where at some point, they ride horses along the beach or the prairie or wherever, and, well, usually they're both riding the same horse, because that's more romantic, but the only time these guys have had two people on them, it's been me and a little kid, so I dunno how they'd handle two adult men." He was rambling, and it was sweet, because Keith knew it meant he was nervous. Which meant Keith wasn't the only one.

"It's okay," he said, "we can ride together on my hoverbike sometime." He thought he'd like to have Lance behind him on his bike, Lance's arms around him, his face pressed into Keith's shoulder as they raced over the desert cliffs Keith had learned to pilot it across.

They rode into the woods and Keith found himself having to duck tree branches that came at him as Lance picked less-worn paths, steering his horse like he had a direction in mind, but the path winding like he didn't know where he was going.

Eventually, they reached a clearing, and Lance pulled Gadget to a stop with a soft, "*whoa*." Gizmo obediently slowed beside him, and Keith watched as Lance swung one long leg over Gadget's back and hopped off, then followed suit.

"There's fireflies all over this place in the summer, but I guess they're gone, now," Lance said. The clearing was more of a meadow, soft grass long and

unmowed, dotted with flowers. The sun was setting over the tops of the trees behind them, the red of the sky matching the red of the leaves, and Keith surprised himself when he took Lance's hand. It felt like the most natural thing in the world, until Keith realized he was holding Lance's hand, and he had no idea what to do with himself.

"It's nice," he said, to break the silence. "I've been to a lot of planets with some weird wildlife, but nothing beats Earth."

"Really? Not even that place with the purple trees?" Lance asked, squeezing his hand, just a little.

"They had Keith-eating monsters, so, no."

Lance laughed and leaned into his side, releasing his hand only so he could put his arm around Keith's waist. He was still taller than Keith, enough that Keith could lean his head on Lance's shoulder, could breathe in and inhale the scent of Lance's skin over the woodsy smell of their surroundings.

"You know, you're going to have to come home more often," Lance said, "if you're going to be my boyfriend."

Keith swallowed, the word 'boyfriend' throwing him off, wedging a knot into his throat. "I, uh. I'll come home," he said. "I want to convince the Blades to get a base set up here, so we can work more closely with the Garrison. And, you know, there might be some selfish reasons for that."

"Trying to make me happy isn't selfish of you," Lance said, excusing him, and Keith put his other arm around Lance, too, turning so his chest was pressed against Lance's, hugging him for longer than Keith thought he'd ever hugged anybody before, not even Hunk. Lance's fingers ran through his hair, and Keith found himself glad he'd left it out of his usual ponytail for once.

Keith leaned away just enough that he could look Lance in the face, letting one of his hands rest against Lance's cheek, his thumb running over the blue crescents just below Lance's eyes. He wasn't sure if they were always warmer than the rest of his skin, or if Lance was just blushing.

"Keith," Lance said, after a while, "I know it's way too early, but I guess I'm kind of known for rushing into things, but—"

"I love you." Keith cut him off. He knew what was about to come out of Lance's mouth, could feel the way Lance's heart starting to race. He never took his eyes off Keith's. And part of Keith, the part that still wanted everything with Lance to be a competition, had to be the first one to say it.

"Are you always gonna beat me to the punch?" Lance asked, giving him an exasperated snort but pulling him closer, the actions disparate, but somehow perfect. He pressed a fond kiss to Keith's temple. "I love you, too."

The hand Keith had around Lance's back curled into a fist in his jacket, wrinkling the fabric to keep him as close as possible. "Kiss me," he said, his voice coming out raspy, nearly inaudible, but it must've been loud enough, because Lance's hand cupped the back of his neck to pull him closer and his mouth met Keith's, soft at first, but then melting into the kind of heat and passion Keith associated with their relationship.

Lance kept kissing him long past when Keith would've nervously pulled away, like he was certain Keith wanted to keep going, and he was right.

Lance was good at this.

Lance was better than Keith at this.

He'd never have admit that in a million years, but he enjoyed it regardless, letting Lance take control with the kind of surrender that made Keith dizzy. Or maybe the dizziness was because of the thing Lance was doing with his tongue.

One of the horses made a soft noise and stomped at the ground and it startled both of them out of it, eyes wide, looking at each other like they'd been caught, even though the witness was a horse, and couldn't possibly understand that it had caught two humans making out like teenagers. The horse had also been there the entire time, which made their surprise all the more ridiculous, and Lance burst into laughter, sinking forward until his face was buried in Keith's chest, smothering his giggles there.

Keith held him close, kissing him on the crown of his head, smiling as he listened to Lance laugh.

Lance's laughter eventually faded into a happy sigh and he wrapped his arms around Keith again, holding him like he had no intention to let go anytime soon. Keith was still smiling.

He noticed he'd been smiling a lot more than usual, lately. He used to think it was Earth that made him happy, that made him feel at peace for once in his life, but he was starting to think he'd feel this way anywhere, as long as Lance was by his side.

Author's Note:

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